

STATE OF MICHIGAN

Family
Independence
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New law increases FIP requirements

Work participation upped from 30 to 40 hours per week for some New immediate sanction policy for noncompliance with Work First

Governor John Engler signed Senate Bill 817 on Jan. 11, a new state law that substantially changes requirements in the Family Independence Program (also known as FIP, formerly AFDC) for participants expected to work.

The law requires, in some cases, that FIP recipients work 40 hours a week and clarifies program eligibility requirements.

“This bill is the latest step in welfare reform,” said Engler. “Its message is clear: anyone who can work, should work, and those who can work full-time should.

“The transition from welfare to work has followed a clear progression.

“Our strategy all along has been to require work and remove barriers to employment,” he said.

The new law, sponsored by state Sen. Shirley Johnson of Royal Oak:

- Requires a FIP applicant (unless deferred) to attend Work First before a case is opened.
- Establishes the expectation that Family Independence Program customers should work 40 hours a week, unless determined otherwise.
- Requires the FIA to evaluate the needs of individuals currently deferred from Work First for a disability-related reason instead of granting a blanket deferral.
- Establishes consistency between the penalties for noncompliance with child support and noncompliance with Work First.
- Establishes a single sanction policy for noncompliance with Work First. The FIA must give the client 10 days to show good cause for noncompliance. If good cause does not exist, a sanction of at least one-month ineligibility is immediate.
- Requires FIA to report to the state Legislature on sanctions.
- Establishes a sunset date of Dec. 31, 2004 for certain exemption and noncompliance provisions.

Local Michigan Works! Agencies provide Work First services, which are available locally to all FIP customers to help them prepare for and locate employment and related services.

Engler proposes 2002 early retirement plan

Gov. Engler proposed a 2002 early retirement program Feb. 5 that includes a new 80-and-out eligibility requirement for state employees. Legislation to enact this proposal was presented to the Legislature as part of the 2003 Executive Budget on Thursday, Feb. 7. To be eligible, a state employee must meet an 80-and-out eligibility requirement (age and number of years combined must total 80). There is no age minimum. Preliminary estimates show slightly more than 8,000 employees currently in the state’s retirement system qualify, and just over half of eligible employees are expected to participate in the early retirement program.

Additional details are available on the DMB Office of Retirement Services State Employees’ Retirement System web page www.state.mi.us/dmb/ors/SERS/sersWhatsNew.htm

FIA people

Robert Cecil, director of FIA Office of Adult Services, retired from state service Feb. 1 to take the position of public guardian in Santa Clara County, Calif. **Knud Hansen** will fill that role on an interim basis beginning Feb. 4. Cecil had been an FIA employee since 1968, first as a caseworker in Wayne County, later as a program specialist and project director. He was manager at the Wayne County Hamtramck District in 1981 and directed the DSS Bureau of Employment Services until 1992, when he became Adult Services director. He was a charter member of the Teaming for Excellence steering team. "His passion, commitment and knowledge will be missed by his staff, co-workers and those of us who have had the



Robert Cecil

privilege to work with him during his 33-year career," said Jim Beougher, director of FIA Child and Family Services Administration.



Lawrence Taylor

Lawrence Taylor, district manager of the Western Wayne Child and Family Services district since 1999, passed away unexpectedly Jan. 12. He was 51. Mr. Taylor had worked for the FIA for 23 years, first as a typist clerk in 1978, then becoming an assistance payment worker and welfare services specialist. In 1988 he was promoted to general services program manager and later to CFS social services program manager. He became a division administrator and earned the Western Wayne CFS manager position. Mr. Taylor, who was a Teaming for Excellence facilitator, was preceded in death by a brother, Edward Jr., and is survived by his wife, mother, two sisters, five nieces and nephews.

Duane Wilson, a training consultant with FIA Child Welfare Institute, was among a dozen people to receive awards from Dads of Michigan and Moms for Dads Inc. during their 2001 "Children Need Both Parents" awards banquet Jan. 12 in Detroit. Wilson was honored as a "state official of the year" by the fatherhood education and advocacy organizations. Located in the Child and Family Services Administration, the Child Welfare Institute provides training for new FIA and contract staff in prevention, CPS, foster care, adoption, and juvenile justice areas.

Payroll trivia

Leap year affects state payroll

Given that there are 26 pay periods in a year, every year will have two months with three paydays instead of two. This cannot occur in February except during leap years. Since the one day of 14 in any pay period (the actual pay day) must fall on Feb. 1, then three pay days in February will only occur, on average, every 14 leap years, or every 56 years. The next time February has three pay days is the year 2024 when the pay dates are Feb. 1, 15 and 29.



FIA Icon

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Family Independence Agency*

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From the Director

By Douglas E. Howard

Director, Family Independence Agency



TANF reauthorization looming

I attended an event in Midland Jan. 11 with U.S. Rep. David Camp, members of the county Family Independence Agency and Michigan Works! Agency, local employers, former public assistance customers and other community partners. Our goal was to discuss with Rep. Camp the upcoming reauthorization of the federal welfare reform act, which expires this year.

While there are challenges and opportunities that need to be addressed in the next round of welfare reform, our state and others have consistently recommended that, when Congress rewrites the act reauthorizing Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), it continues to ensure that opportunities exist to support low-income families to help them leave or avoid welfare.

Our former customers and the employers present in Midland that Friday afternoon in January helped reinforce the message that engaging public assistance customers in the work force is the single most important element of the reform law, and that work should remain its centerpiece after reauthorization.

Why is this so important? Because states no longer serve just cash assistance cases. We—the FIA and our partners in welfare reform—help former welfare families and at risk low-income families stay in the work force by providing job supports. We work with families to collect their child support obligations. Many supports such as child day care, health care, transportation, prevention and work-related expenses may be costly but pay off by producing tax-paying citizens, building stronger families, and breaking intergenerational cycles of dependency. In other words, these supports help states like ours meet the established federal goals of the 1996 reform act.

A national newspaper recently editorialized that, because the recession was pushing cash assistance cases up, the “new” welfare must be the same as the old program. The facts suggest otherwise. In the last recession, Michigan’s AFDC caseload peaked at about 230,000 cases. This was during a time when the state population was about 9.5 million. We are now approaching the 80,000 case threshold in the Family Independence Program and the state population is almost 10 million.

Some commentators say the reauthorized TANF act should be poverty elimination legislation. By encouraging and supporting people in the work place, the current program does that. In Michigan, FIP recipients can pursue training approved by a local Michigan Works! Agency and meet their participation standard by a combination of study time and employment.

Information from the 2000 census shows poverty declined more in the welfare reform era than any other time in America since such statistics have been gathered. Coincidence? Possibly, but also a strong indicator that reforms of the 1990s contributed to the achievement of unanticipated goals.

Our state and most others have requested that Congress take other steps in reauthorization—don’t dictate strategies for states but set broad goals and allow states maximum flexibility to achieve goals. Maintain current TANF funding, at a minimum, and continue to provide bonuses and incentives for performance. These mechanisms encouraged and rewarded states’ innovations and should be renewed.

For us, welfare reform is our business. Public assistance has changed a great deal since it was introduced after the Great Depression of the 1930s, then expanded in the Great Society years of the 1960s and amended again in the 1990s. With your help and assistance from the U.S. Congress, I know we can move forward together in the new century and continue to help low-income Michigan residents achieve their goals of economic self-sufficiency. Thank you for helping.

Intercepted letters

Date: Jan. 10
To: Joyce Hula, Family Independence Manager
Hillsdale County Family Independence Agency, Hillsdale
Subj: Sue Fowle

As the Elementary Success worker for Gier School, I want to extend my thanks and compliments to one of your workers, Sue Fowle. Sue helped organize and distribute Toys for Tots to our (December 2001) program, so we, in turn, could deliver them to needy families. In service and support, Sue exceeded our expectations. She donated much time and energy to this project with friendliness, courtesy, and concern. It was a pleasure working with Sue to help our clients through the holidays. It is the individual workers, like Sue Fowle, who really make a difference.

Laura Van Wormer

**Elementary Success Program worker for Gier Elementary School, Hillsdale
Community Action Agency**

■ "Hillsdale FIA is the 'dropping' point for the toys that are mentioned," said Gloria Gripman of Hillsdale FIA. "Sue Fowle (a social services specialist who does prevention) organizes the distribution of all these toys to FIA families and foster children and many other agencies in the community. Sue spent many hours one weekend just organizing all the toys that were dropped at Hillsdale FIA. This helps workers choose gifts for their FIA families or foster children. This isn't the first year Sue has spent much time doing this." Hillsdale FIA and other local agencies helped distribute toys to 675 children in the community at Christmas.

Date: Jan. 30
To: Randy Koekkoek
Kent County FIA, Grand Rapids
Subj: Thanks!

Randy, thank you. We are truly fortunate to have FIA as a partner. From the state level with Doug (Howard) to the county level with Andy (Zylstra) to the project level with you, and to the caseworker level with Joyce (Bosscher), the FIA has confirmed again and again the value of dedicated public servants to society. Without the FIA team, the welfare-to-career program could never have achieved its current state of success.

Mike Goldman

Cascade Engineering, Grand Rapids

■ Cascade Engineering is an award-winning welfare-to-work employer that works closely with Kent County FIA. This message was copied to other cited persons including FIA director Howard, who submitted it for publication. For more on this, keep reading.

Date: Jan. 22
To: Lynn Ettinger
FIA Office of Communications
Subj: FIA-Net

In the last Director's Communications Committee meeting, we discussed many things including the poll now on FIA-Net. I just wanted to let your office know how pleased I've been with the direction this has taken. Thank you for taking the information seriously that is gathered from us at the meetings and using the poll as a vehicle to gather more information. It certainly has gotten discussion going on the web board! It's been a long time since I've seen such debate. Please pass this along to Karen Smith, as I wasn't sure which e-mail address was hers. As always, thanks for being my front line connection to the Office of Communications.

Nancy Driy

Benzie County Family Independence Agency, Beulah

■ The Director's Communications Committee is a group of employees that makes recommendations to the FIA director. Smith is director of FIA Office of Communications. For more about the survey, see story on page 17.

Date: Jan. 15
To: JoAnne Nagy, Director
FIA Children's Protective Services and Foster Care
Subj: Garry Goddard

I agree—Garry is the best! Reviewing the legal opinions Garry forwards to us gives me confidence in the decisions we make each day and points out where we need to be careful so cases won't be overturned. I really appreciate the time he takes to send us this legal information.

Jane Mecomber

Kalamazoo County FIA, Kalamazoo

■ This message was prompted by the following message from Goddard to Nagy:

For any of you who might be interested from time to time in looking up a particular statute, where you know the citation to the Michigan Compiled Laws chapter and section follow the directions below and you can find the most recent version of the unannotated statute.

- Go to FIA-Net.
- Click on Internet sites.
- Click on Michigan Government sites.
- Click on Michigan Legislature.
- Under search (second gray area) click on Michigan Compiled Laws.
- Under MCL Quick Start type in the statute number if you know it.

You can also use this site to determine whether a statute exists covering some issue. That's a little more difficult but most of you can figure it out. When the list of statutes appears click on the hypertext link to the one you selected. I feel constrained to add that whenever reading statutory or case material check with your legal consultant because what you see isn't always what you get at law, or other endeavors.

Date: Jan. 10
To: Andy Zylstra, Director
Kent County FIA
Doug Howard
Subj: Poem

Deirdre Thomas stopped by my office today to drop off her Poem that she read at the Health and Human Services' regional "listening session" in Chicago. The following is her poem:

WELFARE REFORM

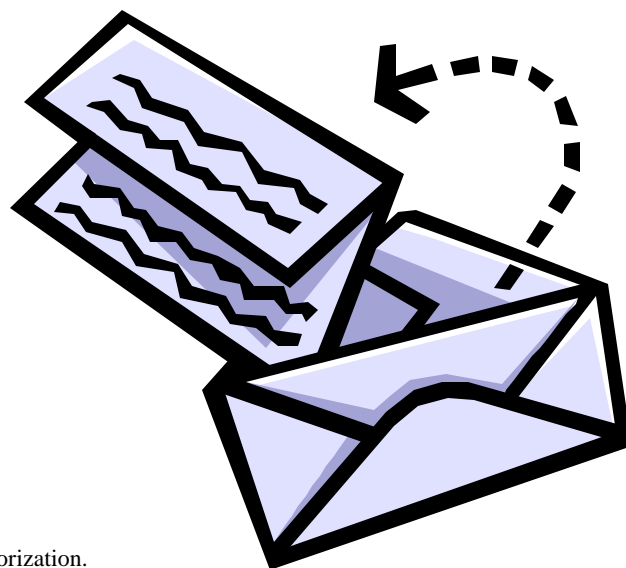
By Deirdre Thomas

W is for the way it built my self-esteem.
E is for the excitement I had to once succeed.
L is for the longtime I had to do without.
F is for the freedom in me that one day would make me shout.
A is for the anxiousness I had to go to work.
R is for the refining of myself that did not hurt!
E is for the energy it took to get my needs.

R is for the recharging of my soul inside of me.
E is for everyone & everything that made it so.
F is for the friends I made in the process of my growth.
O is for the opportunities that have come my way.
R is for the rewards that I get each and every day.
Now **M** is for the most important thing of all.
And that is, this spells **Welfare Reform** that tells it all.

Joyce Bosscher, Family Independence Specialist
Kent County FIA, Grand Rapids

■ Bosscher, Thomas & Howard attended the Chicago session on TANF reauthorization.





Helping each other: Achiever of the Month Lucinda Holloway (left) was referred to her current job by customers George and Maria Dushaj, above. Also in the photo are Lucinda's children, Lance and Lauren.

Waterford woman is 97th Achiever of the Month

Domestic violence, lack of skills, single parenthood no setback as single mother of two enters health care profession

By Martha Hach, Volunteer Services Coordinator
Oakland County Family Independence Agency, Pontiac
Telephone (248) 975-4827

PONTIAC—Waterford resident Lucinda Holloway was honored as the 97th recipient of the Achiever of the Month award Dec. 19 at the Oakland County FIA Baldwin District office.

Family Independence Agency director Douglas E. Howard made the presentation at a ceremony before a standing room only crowd that included Lucinda's proud parents and children—Lance, age 10, and Lauren, age 6—Michigan Works! Agency representatives, numerous community partners, her employer and home health customers, and FIA staff.

Established in 1993, the award recognizes public assistance recipients who have demonstrated outstanding progress toward self-sufficiency. The single mother of two was selected to receive the December award because of her determination to become independent of the welfare system in the face of enormous odds.

Director Howard acknowledged Lucinda's struggle. "The Achiever of the Month program celebrates the challenges along the way as well as the destination," he said. "It is important because it involves special people like Lucinda with our staff so they can see what they do makes a difference.

"Achieving is what our agency is all about – people overcoming barriers or personal problems that interfere with their ability to succeed."

Lucinda faced many obstacles along the way, including losing her job after taking a medical leave of

absence due to a serious domestic violence situation.

In April 2001, she turned to the Oakland County FIA for assistance to provide for her family. At this point, she was committed to making positive changes in her life and struggled hard to do what was necessary to provide for her family.

When Lucinda came to the FIA she was already involved in counseling at the HAVEN (Help Against Violent Encounters Now), an Oakland County domestic violence shelter. Mercy Care Network also provided counseling and support.

Mary Strand, Oakland County FIA family independence specialist at the Baldwin Office, collaborated in her case with Kim Gorecki, Work First specialist from the Waterford Career Center, a Michigan Works! Agency contractor.

The team began assisting Lucinda to remove other barriers to self-sufficiency. With their help she explored various training opportunities and completed an in-home care nursing training program through the Helping Hands Agency.

When Lucinda completed instruction she began working at Helping Hands in home care nursing. Lucinda continued her training by completing a nurses assistant program with the American Red Cross in September 2001.

She is currently employed as a nursing assistant through Atrium Home and Health Care in Centerline. Pam Walsh, Lucinda's supervisor, praised her accomplishments and said, "Lucinda's employment here will last as long as she wants it."

Holloway's FIP grant and Food Assistance benefits closed in October 2001 due to excess income. She currently receives Child Development and Care benefits and transitional Medicaid.

The achiever was determined to do whatever she could to provide a better life for her family. Despite her experiences with domestic violence, temporary housing and unemployment, Lucinda remained optimistic and committed to making the most of every opportunity that came her way.

"It was a pleasure for me assisting Ms. Holloway with her goals as she moved toward self-sufficiency," Strand said.

"From the beginning, she let me know that it was her intention that public assistance would be temporary for her and her children."

Lucinda persevered and has proven that it is possible to succeed against the odds. She plans to relocate and own a home. A short-term goal is to receive her certified nurse's assistant license, while her long-term goal is to become a registered nurse.

Given her recent successes and demonstrated ability to meet life's challenges, there is little doubt that she will achieve both of these goals.



At the ceremony: a momento of Lucinda's big day and a portrait with Oakland County FIA Baldwin District manager Billy Holland and FIA director Doug Howard.



Hitting the FIA “links”

Plans under way for 2002 All Counties Golf Challenge

Last year’s winning county arranging this year’s event in Grand Rapids

By Henry Roukema

Kent County Family Independence Agency, Grand Rapids

■ For more information call or e-mail Chuck Audy at Audyc@michigan.gov or (616) 247-6089

Plans are well underway for the second annual FIA “All Counties Golf Challenge” to be held Aug. 19 at Boulder Creek Golf Course in Grand Rapids.

You may recall the first annual contest was held at Marywood Golf Club in Battle Creek and was won by Kent County. Under current rules the winning county hosts the next contest and this article is to update all interested parties.

The first golf challenge involved eight teams from seven counties, all in southwest Michigan. It is our hope to expand this contest to counties from all over the state. We have, in fact, been getting inquiries from as far away as the U.P. We will try to negotiate a rate with a motel not far from the course and we will pass on information in future issues of *FIA Icon* and *FYI*, the agency’s online newsletter.

Happening Aug. 19

Our plan is to have a shotgun start at 8 AM. This means we will finish the round by approximately 12:30 PM. The challenge will again be played in a four-man scramble format in which each team member tees off and each plays their next shot from wherever the best shot ended up. This will be done all the way through the green.

After golf, we will have a sandwich buffet luncheon, a time when we can network, enjoy our day and honor winners. During the luncheon, we will present the trophies and prizes and we will have a brief meeting on the outing and if there are ways to improve it. Everybody should be able to be on his or her way by 2 PM.

The 8 o’clock start might seem early, but that tee time is necessary to get a better deal from the course. If you want a shotgun start, that takes up the whole course. Later in the day, the green fees become astronomical. We have negotiated a price of \$55 with the course that includes golf, cart, and the luncheon.

Boulder Creek is a newer course designed by a high-profile architect. It is advertised as a “resort style” course and features tight fairways and large, very fast, well contoured greens. There are lots of sand traps on the course and several water holes. It is not an easy course but perfect for a scramble.

Need 18, can handle 40

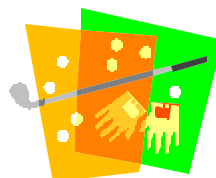
The smallest number the course requires to give us a shotgun start is 18 teams. We have 13 verbal commitments thus far and therefore need only a few more.

We believe we can handle as many as 40 teams. Thirty should certainly be no problem for us. Multiple teams from one county or blended teams from two small counties are welcome.

Because of the early tee-off time, many teams will have to come the night before. We will attempt to negotiate a good room rate with a hotel not far from the course. Meanwhile, everybody should think about his or her golf game during the winter. Positive thoughts will improve your swing!

As it says above, contact Chuck Audy if you are interested. It’s winter now but think warm weather and the FIA’s upcoming 2002 All Counties Challenge, a time to have fun, share war stories and bring a little dimension to our lives as FIA employees.

Fore!





Left: Otsego County FIA employee Joy Breckow and her husband, Harry, are pictured after helping sort and bag a huge number of gifts. "She has been doing this the past few years outside of normal work hours," said FIA director Cindy Pushman. "Like many FIA employees state-wide, she carries a spirit of charity into her personal life."

Christmas "up north" FIA style

Otsego and Crawford counties help customers and office find some cheer at holidays

By Cynthia G. Pushman, Director

Otsego-Crawford Family Independence Agency

Telephone (989) 731-3108 (Otsego) or (989) 348-7691 (Crawford)

Otsego and Crawford County Family Independence Agency offices worked hard this past Christmas season to help provide some holiday spirit to many of the lower income families in our area.

Through the "Take Time to Care" program, Otsego County was able to help approximately 500 families with food baskets and coordinate giving at least two presents and one clothing outfit to each of 900 children.

This is the ongoing result of a cooperation between the Otsego County FIA office (located in Gaylord) and community outreach organizations.

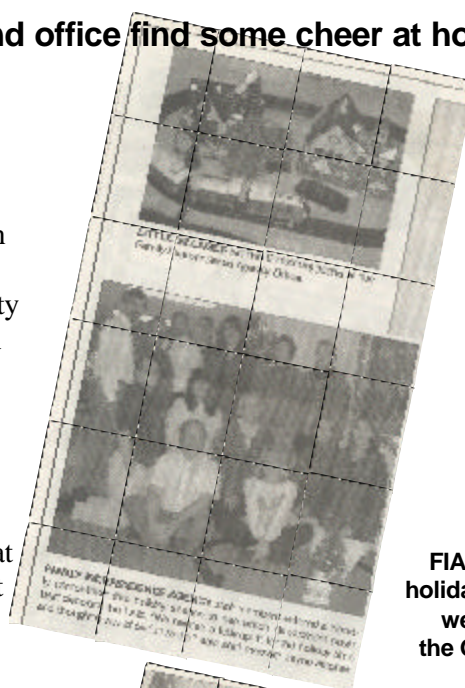
In Crawford County we were able to assist 350 children at Christmas by giving each child a new toy along with a food basket to the family. We also gave out gift baskets to 90 adult services customers.

The Crawford County FIA office is located in Grayling.

Also, during the course of the 2001 holiday season, family independence specialists Jayne Wagner and Sue Valentine organized the staff of the Otsego County FIA office into a little friendly unit competition decorating their individual areas. Our building is in a T-shape with the Services Unit in one end, FIP staff in the other and clerical in the last wing.

The competition escalated into all out craziness, as decorating grew daily in each wing, with staff bringing in personal items.

At one point the hallways looked similar to an airport runway with lights running the full length of the hallway. It got to be such fun that visitors contacted the local newspaper which featured us in a December issue reflecting on the healthy fun we were able to have and share with our customers.



FIA staff and their holiday decorations were featured in the Gaylord Herald Times Dec. 22 edition.



Yes, we are Teaming for Excellence!

Counties share examples of Teaming for Excellence & Customer Service Excellence

By John Ferris, Adult Protective Services, Oakland County Family Independence Agency

Teaming for Excellence Steering Team

Telephone (248) 669-7673

E-mail ferrisj2@michigan.gov

One outcome in the Teaming for Excellence 2002 business plan communication initiative is to communicate and promote Teaming for Excellence (TFE) principles and practices to all employees on an ongoing basis. A key step is to foster discussion of TFE on the FIA-Net general web board.

As a follow up to Customer Service Excellence training (CSE) and "Hooked on Excellence" regional conferences, I posted to the FIA-Net general web board a brief description of Teaming for Excellence and CSE to foster discussion and raise awareness, as well as to invite staff to share examples of local activities. The original communication, posted last Nov. 30, has been read 5,077 times through early February. Following are two excellent examples we received:



■ Linda Randall in Ogemaw County, writes: "Our CSE unit representatives met and discussed our internal customer service excellence and came up with the following.

"Customer Service Excellence can be achieved with communication, information sharing and understanding between all personnel and units. In this spirit we decided on regular staff meetings for all units. Meeting agendas will be emailed one week before the meeting so interested parties can plan to attend and make presentations. For example, reception might like to learn about new policy relating to SER changes or bookkeeping may want to share EBT information. All unit staff meeting minutes will be emailed to Ogemaw Group so that everyone will be informed of items pertinent to that unit.

"Job shadowing between all units is welcome (to) promote a greater understanding of what is involved in each position. Once each quarter one unit will sponsor an all-office potluck-resource lunch. The sponsoring unit will be making a presentation on the inner workings, program or policy changes, upcoming events. In addition, the sponsoring unit will have \$25 discretionary money (*not* state money) to spend toward the event. After lunch and the presentation, the sponsoring unit will raffle off five cash or gift prizes worth \$10 (*not* state money). All employees are eligible to win, but once you have won, your name will not be included in future raffles. Please direct any further questions you may have to your CSE representative."

■ Kathy Gutting from Clare County writes: "Our TFE has been doing many fun activities to get staff participation. We started a project of contacting local furniture stores and local hotels and asking for beds that can be donated to some external customers that may not have them for everyone in their household. These are usually used beds in decent condition that people have traded in for new ones.

"Recently, the staff and TFE members collected new blankets from the community. Over 100 blankets were donated and will be given away to families at our local Project Kids Christmas distribution. The TFE last year coordinated a fresh food giveaway to 80-plus seniors and/or disabled folks in the communities. This year, 117 have received an invitation to come and receive their fresh food basket and meat voucher.

"Throughout the year, monthly potlucks are held. All of these activities are fun and help relieve everyday stresses for the staff. Doing special things for the external customers makes everyone feel good. Hearing ideas from other offices will be beneficial. Thanks for starting it!"

Your examples of Teaming for Excellence and Customer Service Excellence are welcome. Log on to the FIA-Net, Webboards, Open General, then complete sign-on, Conferences, Teaming For Excellence (John Ferris). Share your activities and ideas and we'll all learn from each other.

Using FIA-Net

FIA Icon and other important stuff available there

FIA-Net polling place is one of the newest features

Posting messages on the Open General web board, like John Ferris talks about on page 16, is just one thing you can do on the FIA-Net—the FIA Intranet web site restricted to employees. Another is vote in a new survey every week. Another is read or download FIA Icon, which is published in full color on the Intranet and FIA Internet web sites.

I often receive e-mail from readers that ask, “Since FIA Icon is available in color on the FIA-Net, why don’t you stop publishing it and save all that money?” It’s a great question, one best answered this way: we aren’t sure people read it on the FIA-Net, not yet anyway. (FIA Icon is also available online at the Family Independence Agency Internet web site, www.mfia.state.mi.us, for nonemployee readers.)

In consultation with the FIA Survey Center and Office of Human Resources, the Office of Communications conducted a scientific reader poll in November 2000. The survey sample was structured to be representative of FIA employees statewide in terms of geography and job classification. Response was very high.

The survey told us many things about how we use the FIA-Net, Internet and how we read FIA Icon. Most employees read a little or a lot of the newsletter and most think it is important that the agency distribute this information.

One finding stood out, however. When asked, “If the Icon were provided online would you be more or less likely to read it?” almost half of employees and nonemployee subscribers said they would be less likely to read it. Only one employee in six indicated they would be more likely to read it. About 30 percent said it didn’t matter.

Another finding from that survey indicated more than one-third of FIA employees visit the FIA-Net monthly or *less often*. More than 11 percent of survey respondents reported they had *never* gone to the FIA-Net.

If you haven’t visited FIA-Net recently, you haven’t had the chance to participate in informal polls on how you spent your holidays, whether or not your customers have certain skills, or whether you think substance abuse in FIA homes keeps children from returning home from foster care.

The polling place was added in recent months for employees to give their opinion on topical work-related issues. So, if you haven’t been there, go to the Open General web board and post a note about your Teaming for Excellence program. And, by all means, vote!

—Larry VanDeSande

The screenshot shows the FIA-Net website interface. Annotations with arrows point to various features:

- "What's New" tells you what's happening and is updated daily.** Points to the "What's New" section at the top.
- You can vote here.** Points to the "FIA-Net Polls" section on the right.
- You can jump to the FIA public website or read L-letters here.** Points to the "Other Links" section at the bottom.
- You can get on the Open General web board here.** Points to the "Webboards" section at the bottom.
- You can read FIA Icon and FYI here.** Points to the "FIA Icon" and "FYI" links in the left sidebar.
- After you vote, you can read polling results here.** Points to the "FIA-Net Polls" section on the right.

The website layout includes a top navigation bar, a left sidebar with links like "Agency Programs", "Computer Systems", and "Employee Information", a main content area with "What's New" and "Webboards", and a right sidebar with "Agency Websites", "Resource Library", and "FIA-Net Polls".

Bay Pines Center response to Sept. 11

Treatment youth hold car wash to help with relief fund

By Janie Ross in conjunction with the female treatment youth at Bay Pines Center

FIA Bureau of Juvenile Justice

Telephone (248) 442-6539

ESCANABA—Nestled amidst the beautiful pine trees in Escanaba is Bay Pines Center, a 40-bed juvenile detention and treatment facility.

The residents of Bay Pines were watching, like many of us were, as the tragic events of Sept. 11 unfolded before our eyes. The female youths, so moved by this tragedy, wanted to do something to help. Their thoughts turned to action as they planned a community car wash, with the proceeds to assist in disaster relief efforts.

The car wash was held Sept. 22. That morning the girls were filled with excitement as they dressed in red, white and blue and thought of the importance of the day ahead. For seven hours the girls worked, under staff supervision, washing car after car. Many citizens stopped to make a donation without having their cars washed.

Escanaba may be considered a small town but its citizens proved to be larger than life and came with full pockets to show support for the girls and their efforts that day. With the help of Wal-Mart—for the use of their parking lot—and McDonalds—for supplying lunch—the group raised \$637 to send to the American Red Cross for the World Trade Center Disaster Relief Effort.

These girls are working through troubles of their own, yet they put them aside and, with great pride, worked together to help those affected by this terrible tragedy. For them it was more than just the money they raised and the change in the way they looked at our society today. It was about:

- Thousands of people who lost their lives and the children whose mothers and fathers didn't come home that day.
- Suffering that people went through as they spent their final hours trapped beneath layers of concrete, hoping and praying to be rescued.
- Heroes who sacrificed themselves and everything they had to save someone that they had never met.
- Thousands of lost faces on "missing" posters and the pain and sadness in the eyes of the people that flooded the streets with hope of a miracle.

The girls saw this as a way to say they were sorry for the hurt the country was feeling, for the hurt they had caused their parents and for hurting themselves.

Because of the horrific events of Sept. 11 the female youths of Bay Pines wanted to make a difference in a time when we as a nation needed it most. Each of the girls expressed their sadness of the tragedy in their own way. One of the girls wanted to share a poem that she had written. Its text follows:

America Hand in Hand

By Danielle

Think about the people who lost their lives.
Said goodbye to their kids, husbands, and wives.
To save someone they did not know.
Said their last prayers, and let themselves go.
It says a lot for the people around, how they would
run in a building while it tumbles to the ground.
Some were lucky and were alive, but some were
unfortunate and unable to survive.
We are a strong nation and we will stand tall,
We'll work together and get through it all.
This is where teamwork really sticks out.
And this is what America is all about.
Nothing will stop us. We'll fight 'till the end,
and we'll come walking out hand in hand.



This photo, from a local newspaper, was amended so Bay Pines residents could not be identified.

Safety Summit 2001

Gathering reviews challenges, achievements in FIA employee safety

By Lynn Subramanian

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The second annual FIA Safety Summit was held in Lansing last Nov. 28. The objective was to review recommendations and outcomes from the 2000 Safety Summit and develop additional recommendations for change, improvements or new initiatives.

Approximately 225 FIA staff attended the event. Of these, 150 staff came from 65 county offices and the rest represented Central Office units, employee unions, Michigan Disability Determination Service and Michigan Commission for the Blind.

A panel of FIA administrators opened the session with morning addresses. They included: FIA director Doug Howard; Mike Masternak, director of the Office of Human Resources; Jim Nye, director, Outstate Operations; and Don Monta, director of Bureau of Legal Affairs.

They spoke on topics such as overview and updates since the last Safety Summit, agency initiatives on safety, the new requirements of “Lisa’s law” legislation, and issues related to Michigan’s new “carrying concealed weapons” law. The panel also took questions and comments from the audience.

Next came presentations on FIA Safety Awareness Week activities from four FIA offices that—later during the program—were announced as winners of “Safety Awards”—Marquette, Berrien, Lenawee and Lake-Mason.

Speakers from each of the four counties presented detailed descriptions of Safety Awareness Week activities in their offices. Afterward, Howard presented the ‘Safety Awareness Week Award’ to representatives from the four counties. Marquette County was the first place winner. Berrien County took the second place award. Lenawee County and Lake-Mason received honorable mention.

“These counties have documented safety programs that serve our employees very well,” said Howard. “Their initiatives show safety is an important priority in the FIA.”

Safety award winners were selected by Michigan Department of Management and Budget’s health and safety coordinator.

In the afternoon, participants broke into eight workgroups to brainstorm and develop safety recommendations. The workgroup topics were:

- Home call procedures and field support equipment (2 workgroups).
- Office safety procedures.
- Rapid Response Team and incident reporting.
- Security & building safety issues (2 workgroups).
- Training.
- Injury prevention.

Workgroup facilitators developed a list of recommendations for their workgroup, prioritizing the top three. When the large group reconvened, each workgroup reported on its recommendations. The day ended with closing comments from Doug Howard.

Recommendations from the 2001 Safety Summit will be compiled and posted on the Office of Human Resources FIA-Net site in the near future. They will be used to make targeted improvements in employee safety over the next year. The Office of Professional Development thanks all the speakers, presenters, facilitators and participants who contributed to make the 2001 Safety Summit a success.



FIA employee excels at customer service

MCB counselor earns state organization's job placement award

■ **Bernie Kramer and Bob Robertson of Michigan Commission for the Blind teamed on this article.**

Michelle Visscher, a Michigan Commission for the Blind (MCB) rehabilitation counselor and teacher at the MCB northwest regional office in Grand Rapids, was recently named the recipient of the 2001 Randy Cronenwett Memorial Award.

The award is presented annually by the Job Placement and Development Division of the Michigan Rehabilitation Association to one of its members that demonstrates outstanding leadership in the area of job placement for individuals with disabilities.

She received the award at the 2001 Michigan Rehabilitation Conference held in Traverse City. John Foster, 2001 president of the association's Job Placement and Development Division, presented the award.

Visscher's award verifies that she provides effective job placement services for MCB clients in Kent, Ottawa, and Muskegon counties. Michelle maintains a network of employer accounts and continually demonstrates a unique ability in coordinating many different services provided by a variety of community organizations.

The award is named after a former job placement and development member. For more information on MCB services available in the northwest region, contact Bernie Kramer at (616) 356-0183.



Michelle Visscher receives the 2001 Randy Cronenwett Memorial Award from John Foster of Kandu Industries in Grand Haven. Michelle and John have teamed to assist MCB clients to become more independent and employed. "I hope Kandu will have future opportunities to serve those clients Michelle works with," John said.

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